

THE STORY OF RAMA

TOGETHER WITH

Puranic Stories & Miscellaneous Pieces.

(IN ENGLISH VERSE)

By

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PREFACE.

The poems contained in this book have been conceived in a moment of devotional urge and have come to me with a natural and compelling force. The poetry has come from the heart, and though it may not possess the embellishments and scholarship of a poet, the diction, rhyme and versification are like those of the boy who lisped in numbers with the words:.....

“Papa, Papa, pity take,
Verses shall I never make”,

when he was being beaten by his father for speaking in an unnaturally poetic way. I would therefore request that the shortcomings, may be overlooked and my compositions taken for what they are worth, for the sake of their devotional themes.

I hope that this publication of mine will arouse a desire in the English minded public, both young and old, to learn more about the stories dealt with here and will thus serve as an introduction to the inexhaustible Treasures of our Indian Puranic Literature to those who have had no opportunity of having direct access to the texts in the Indian languages.

India expects every son and daughter to be conversant with the great stories of the past both for enlightenment and entertainment, and if this publication can give a start in that direction, the author's labours shall not be in vain.

H. Sankaranarayana Iyer, B. A.
Author.

OM

THE STORY OF RAMA.

SITA'S MARRIAGE.

May the god of elephant face
Now smile on us with light and grace,
And all evils that round us rage,
May he dispel from age to age.

Of Solar line, in ages past
A monarch ruled a kingdom vast;
In fair Ayodhya's golden throne,
Sat Das'ratha for valour known.

Though sixty thousand years had rolled,
Great grief had he, that being old,
Without a son, he stood condemned,
As Heaven's doors to him were slammed.

So Sage Vasishta gave advice.
That he perform a sacrifice
With Rishyasringa's guiding hand
For gift of son to bless the land.

From the sacrificial fire,
Arose a form in rich attire;
A bowl of gold with rice from heav'n
For birth of sons by him was giv'n.

The queens partook the rice with joy;
 Kausalya first brought forth a boy,
 Prince Rama named, Lord Vishnu's self,
 Sweet flow'rs were rained from heav'n itself.

Kaikeyi bore her Bharat fair,
 While good Sumitra bore the pair
 Satrugna and the brave Lakshman,
 And all the four, grew up as one.

Prince Rama was to Lakshman all,
 While Bharat was Satrugna's pal;
 The princes learnt to box and fight
 And they became the world's delight.

One day, the king was pleased to meet
 Viswamitra from his retreat;
 The sage demanded Rama's aid,
 To free his home from demons' raid.

"My son, Rama, not yet fourteen."
 "Never the demons, has he seen".
 "He is the apple of my eye,"
 "Without Rama, I sure, must die."

So said the king, but vowed to fight
 The miscreants with all his might.
 The sage did spurn the king's offer
 And called his words most improper.

He said, "Thou dost not know the might"
 "Of Rama's arms in Dharmic fight."
 "But I do know, and so does great"
 "Vasishta too, my sparkling mate."

For Rama's aid, the king despatched
 His son Lakshman, in strength unmatched;
 They reached the forest hermitage
 To guard the yaga of the sage.

There came a show'r of filth and slime
 Poured forth by Thadak, steeped in crime;
 When she was slain by Rama's dart,
 Her son Subahu took her part.

From Rama's bow two arrows sprang
 One killed Subahu with a bang;
 As from the bow, the other sped,
 To ocean's depths Maricha fled.

It killed him not, but from that time,
 He lived in dread of Rama's name.
 With greatest joy, the sage was filled,
 In peace his rites he then fulfilled.

The sage and princes made their way
 To fair Mithila, far away.
 They passed a ruined hermitage
 That once was home of Gautam sage.

His wife Ahalya had a lapse
 With Indra, Lord of all the gods;
 The angry sage pronounced a curse.
 That he be scourged with thousand sores.

And she, his wife be turned to stone
 To wail her lot there, all alone,
 Until the dust of Rama's feet
 Shall cleanse her of her shame and guilt.

And so it now began to pass;
 And freed from sin, Ahalya was
 To lord and husband soon restored
 And Rama's name, they both adored.

Gayness filled all Mith'la's people
 And their homes with tow'r and steeple
 Shone resplendent as the party
 Reached the precincts of the city.

It was their Sita's wedding day
 Janaka's daughter, bright and gay;
 The princes flocked from ev'ry land
 To win the prize of Sita's hand.

"He only weds who bends the bow"
 "That Sita once moved with her toe"
 But none, there was whose strength of arm
 Could lift the bow without a harm.

A voice shot out from distant row,
 "My son, Rama, just see the bow."
 As Rama raised the bow and strung,
 It snapped in two, with dinning clang.

The marriage rites were duly planned,
 And ev'ryone looked gay and grand;
 The king set Rama's palm to rest
 On Sita's palm, and thus addressed.

"This is Sita, my daughter fair"
 "Thy faithful spouse, all virtues' heir;"
 "Take her, Rama, for surely she"
 "Will like a shadow, cling to thee."

As the couple drove in state,
To fair Ayodhya's palace gate,
ParasuRama crossed their path
And Rama quelled his pride and wrath.

RAMA'S BANISHMENT.

As days passed on, the aging king
Vouchsafed to make his Rama king;
And all Ayodhya rocked with joy
To live to see that happy day.

But in that sea of joy was one,
Vile Manthara, the hunch-back crone;
She bore on Ram an ancient spite
And vowed to wreck his crowning rite.

With scheming words and cunning art
She changed the good Kaikeyi's heart
To ask the king two boons of old
And she did just as she was told.

By one, Rama was bade to roam
The wild forest without a home
For fourteen years in cold and heat
With matted hair and roots to eat.

She willed by this her second boon
To see her son crowned all too soon;
But lo! her first and heartless boon
Did make the good king fall in swoon.

Rama obeyed his father's hest
 And as he left for the grim forest
 With Sita and the brave Lakshman,
 With tearful eyes stood all and one.

They crossed the Ganga in a boat
 By Guha rowed, and reached a spot
 On fairest Chitrakuta hill
 And built a hut beside a rill.

Noble Bharat knew Rama's lot
 And cursed his evil mother's plot;
 He raised his sword and seized her hair
 But spared her, fearing Rama's ire.

His mother's greed too, caused the death
 Of his father, whose ev'ry breath
 Spelt Rama's name until he died
 And Bharat's mind was sorely tried.

He spurned the throne his mother won
 And vowed to bring back Raghu's son;
 With all his folk he went to trace
 His loving Ram and win his grace.

When Lakshman saw the mighty crowd,
 He said, "'Tis Bharat, vain and proud"
 "He comes again to do us harm"
 "Let me but show my strength of arm."

Rama told him, "Thou dost not know"
 "How pure my Bharat's love doth glow;"
 "A thousand Rams can scarcely match"
 "One lone Bharat; Stand by and watch."

Bharat fell flat at Rama's feet,
 In tears, he did his Ram entreat
 That he turn back and save his plight
 And rule Ayodhya in his right.

He broke the news how father died,
 How Rama's name he heaved and sighed;
 With grief that none could scarce appease,
 Rama performed his obsequies.

He told Bharat, "Go back and reign"
 "And leave me here, and don't complain;"
 "The fourteen years shall soon pass by,"
 "And we shall meet again in joy."

Bharat replied, "Ne'er without thee"
 "Shall I again Ayodhya see;"
 "With thy sandals set on the throne"
 "Thy vast kingdom shall I govern."

With great sorrow he left his Ram
 And held his court at Nandigram;
 The hallowed sandals Rama owned
 Were then, with regal rites enthroned.



SITA LOST.

To Rama's ears, the sages brought
 Harrowing tales of havoc wrought.
 By Rakshas ev'ry day and night
 That made them live in deadly fright.

He freed the sages in that place
From all their dreadful grim menace
They blessed him in a thousand ways
And wished him all the happy days.

He moved with Sita and Lakshman
To Dandak woods untrod by man;
And while they lived their way in peace,
A Raksha form peeped through the trees.

It was the horrid Surpanaka
And Rama's radiant form she saw,
And love at first sight stole her heart
She changed her form by Raksha art.

In beauteous form she courted Ram
On Lakshman too, she cast her charm;
By both giv'n up and sore distraught,
To seize Sita, she vainly sought.

Her breasts and nose by Lakshman maimed
She sought Kara and Dushan famed
And made their mighty armies range
To fight Rama and take revenge.

Kara and Dushan slain in fight
And their armies wiped out of sight
Surpanaka fled to Ravan's Isle
To fan his ire by artful guile.

Of Sita's charms and her beauty
She spoke that he may have pity
On her mishap in her effort
To snatch Sita for him to sport.

He sought Maricha's magic art
 And made him go and play the part
 Of golden deer 'fore Sita's eye
 And so the deer came trotting by.

When Sita saw the golden deer
 And watched it darting far and near,
 She told her Ram the fun and joy
 If she could have that living toy.

So Rama leaped to catch the deer
 But Lakshman warned, "This doth appear"
 "A Raksha hoax, and so desist"
 "For golden deer doth ne'er exist"

The specious deer lured him away
 And Rama was in great dismay;
 He shot an arrow from his bow
 And laid Maricha down and low.

In Rama's voice, Maricha cried,
 "Help! Sita, Lakshman!" as he died;
 And Lakshman left in Rama's quest
 By Sita's urge, despite protest.

As Lakshman left, grave signs he saw;
 And round the hut he fain did draw
 A magic line she may not cross,
 No stranger too, could it trespass.

Then Ravan came in holy garb
 With vile intent that he may rob
 Rama's consort, and thought thereby
 That void of Sita, Ram would die.

He lured Sita to cross the line,
 And seizing her, made her recline
 Against his breast, and carried her
 Skyward to Lanka, in his car.

When Rama found his Sita gone,
 Through fault of being left alone,
 He blamed Lakshman for what had passed;
 His grief was such as ne'er surpassed

He roamed the woods in Sita's quest
 With neither sleep nor moment's rest;
 He asked the birds, the trees and leaves
 "Name ye the place where Sita lives"

His grief at times to anger flamed
 He strung his bow, the gods he blamed
 And would have destroyed Earth and Heav'n
 But for comfort by Lakshman giv'n.

They went along, and on their way,
 The mighty bird Jatayu lay;
 He battled long for Rama's wife
 In mortal combat risked his life.

Jatayu's rites being performed,
 They journeyed south as the bird informed;
 They passed a day as Sab'ri's guest
 And then resumed their Sita's quest.

Giant Kabanda blocked their path
 And Rama cut his arms in wrath;
 But Kabanda in form divine,
 Heavenward rose, and blessed the twain.

He advised Ram to seek the hand
 Of Sugriva at whose command,
 His wife, whose trace could not be found,
 He could redeem back, safe and sound.

SUGRIVA'S FRIENDSHIP.

The brothers reached a mountain height
 And there a Brahmin came in sight;
 He put them questions shrewd and wise
 Suspecting them as Vali's spies.

So Lakshman said from first to last
 Their present story and the past;
 With great rev'rence, he heard Lakshman
 His form he showed as Hanuman.

He was the wind God's mighty son
 And most accomplished high person;
 He was Sugriva's right hand man
 He bowed to Ram and his Lakshman.

In Ram who was his lord and king
 He lived and moved and had his being;
 He told Sugriv of Ram's presence
 And yokèd them as eternal friends.

Sugriva showed a bundled pack
 With jewels thrown from skyward track;
 Ram told Lakshman to see and tell
 If he could know the jewels well.

Lakshman replied, "I know them not"
 "The crownnet, bangles and the lot"
 "Only the anklets do I know"
 "For daily on her feet I bow."

His grief was more as he espied
 His Sita's jewels, at which he cried;
 Sugriva gave his plighted word
 To search for Sita through this world.

He charged Vali, his own brother
 Of crimes whose force he couldn't weather
 He took by force Ruma his wife
 And tried all means to take his life.

Sugriva's case was just and right
 And one akin to Rama's plight;
 He pledged to strike base Vali dead
 And vowed to crown Sugriva's head.

He set Rama to move away
 The huge Dundhubi from their way;
 By this, his strength he sought to know
 And Rama rolled it by his toe.

To Ram, Sugriva then disclosed
 How Vali grabbed from those opposed
 One half their strength in ev'ry case
 If they did meet him face to face.

Unseen, through trees, came Rama's dart,
 And struck Vali right in his heart
 While he with Sugriva locked in fight
 Was straining hard to win his right.

The fallen Vali reproached Ram
 In a spiteful, scurrilous form;
 But Lakshman probed his light inside
 And then in peace, he gladly died.

Then Rama crowned Sugriva king
 With all Kishkinda rejoicing;
 He soothed Tara in her despair,
 And crowned her Angad, prince and heir.

Sugriva tarried long drinking
 Till Lakshman gave a sharp warning;
 And then he gave his stern command
 To find Sita through all the land.

Hanuman led the Vanar host,
 In him, Rama had trusted most;
 And he gave him his wedding ring
 Which might to Sita, solace bring.

Hanuman, Angad and the rest
 Trudged weary days through wild forest
 Until they reached the Southern Sea
 But could no trace of Sita see.

They met the bear-skinned Jambavan
 Living ever since world began;
 He showed them to a wingless bird
 Sampati, once of skies, the lord.

He heard from them with grief and pain
 Jatayu's death, by Ravan slain;
 His wings he got back at the news
 In turn he gave them helpful news.

With his bright telescopic eyes,
 He saw Sita right through the skies
 And said, She sat beneath a tree
 But how could Vanars cross the sea?

The best of them but tried in vain,
 They could not cross the mighty main.
 Then great Hanuman took his leap
 And through the skies, he crossed the Deep



SITA FOUND.

Hanuman reached fair Lanka's shore
 And there he made a great uproar;
 He fought and killed each Raksha guard
 Who kept the city's watch and ward.

He looked for Sita everywhere
 And last he saw a lady fair
 Lying asleep by Ravan's side
 And mistook her for Rama's bride.

But soon, he blamed his monkey mind
 For, how could he be so purblind
 To think Sita in such a state?
 And then he left the place in haste.

He lost all hope to find Sita
 And roamed the garden Asoka;
 It chanced when on a tree he stood,
 He found her in despondent mood.

He then came down and bowed to her
 And said, he was the messenger
 From Ram, her lord; and tried to sing
 His name and fame and gave his ring.

She saw her husband's ring with joy
 And blessed Hanuman that he enjoy
 Immortal life as Chiranjeevi
 Through all the ages, fair and free.

She wished that he would tell her lord
 Her grief and pain in Ravan's ward;
 And her Chudamani she gave
 That Ram should rush, her lot to save.

While departing, she wished to see
 How he could dare to cross the sea;
 And then he showed his Cosmic Form
 By which he did the feat perform.

Then Ravan came with troupe and train
 And wooed Sita, her love to gain;
 But him she spurned as less than sand
 And said, Ram's vengeance was at hand.

Messengers brought him news with fright
 His fair garden was ravaged quite
 By a monkey that raged and killed
 Many a man in fighting skilled.

Ravan sent his Akshay'Kumar
 To quell the monkey's acts of war;
 The monkey slogged him with a blow
 That slew the prince and laid him low.

Then Indrajit said, he would strive
 To bring the ape dead or alive;
 The monkey proved so full of craft
 That he let loose his Brahma shaft.

And so at last, the ape was caught
 And bound by ropes, to Ravan brought,
 He freed himself and held his own
 And sat higher than Ravan's throne.

He said, "I am the humble slave"
 "Of mighty Ram, whose armies brave"
 "Will flood Lanka; and thou, thy town."
 "And kith and kin, shall soon go down."

At this, he frowned, and gave command
 To bind the monkey foot and hand
 And tear his limbs by sharp tortures
 And strew his flesh to wild vultures.

Then good Vibhishan interposed
 And said, messengers though opposed
 Should ne'er be killed; but that a wise
 And mild rebuke would quite suffice.

The monkey's tail was bound with cloth
 And set alight with fun and mirth;
 The spark became a mighty flame
 The flame, an inferno became.

With whole of Lanka burnt and charred
 And thousands dead or badly scarred,
 That fair Lanka of dazzling gold
 Crumbled to ashes, dead and cold.

Now Vibhishan pleaded hard
 "Return back Sita, to her Lord."
 "But Ravan yelled, Thou base traitor"
 "Away with thee, my false brother."

He left, that he be out of harm;
 Hanuman too, flew back to Ram
 And as he came, he said broadcast
 "Saw I Sita" echoing fast.

The news of Sita gave the thought
 That Ram could save her horrid lot,
 No time was lost by them to see
 That Vanar hosts do cross the sea.

—

THE WAR IN LANKA AND PATTABHISHEKAM.

The army reached the water's edge
 And laboured hard to lay the bridge;
 The sea was rough and turbulent
 The proud Sea God would not relent.

From Rama's bow an arrow sped
 And dried the ocean to its bed;
 The humbled Sea God prayed to Ram
 To restore him to normal form.

He let the bridge be laid with ease,
 The Vanars worked, their lord to please;
 By each his part willingly done,
 The bridge was laid out stone by stone.

Vibhishan flew to Rama's seat
 And laid himself flat on his feet;
 He said, "From Ravan's wrath I flee"
 "Let me not down, O, Ram, save me."

"Do not trust him, he is a spy"
 "Ravan's brother! he sure must die;"
 So spake Lakshman and shrewd Sugriv
 But Hanuman said, "Nay, let him live."

Rama declared, "Whoe'er he be,"
 "It is my sacred vow to see"
 That they that seek my grace to win"
 "Shall have it, even though they sin."

With solemn rites, he gave his word
 To make Vibhishan Lanka's lord;
 And as Chiranjeevi subsist,
 So long as Sun and Moon exist.

They came and flooded Ravan's land
 And fought and killed each Raksha band;
 The Rakshas used their magic art
 But still the Vanars played their part.

Nikumbala's black magic art
 Made Indrajit to set his heart
 To get a mighty armoured car
 To bide invincible in war.

The car began to take its shape,
 When all at once, many an ape
 Befouled the rite, the car, they smashed,
 All hopes of Indrajit were dashed.

But still, with great fury, he fought
 And rack and ruin marked the lot
 Of Vanar hosts, until it came
 To Lakshman's turn to face the game.

But Indrajit's elusive art
 Made Lakshman too to lose his heart.
 Until he invoked Rama's name
 And sent the dart staking his fame,

And true to Rama's name it sped
 And slashed his body from his head;
 And Ravan mourned his tragic death
 As son, and bravest man on earth.

Still, undeterred by grievous loss
 He staked his all in Sita's cause;
 His sturdy Kumbhakarna was killed
 And Moolabala was also stilled.

And last of all, he took command,
 Against Rama, he took his stand;
 He fought with such ferocity
 That dead, in millions, strewed the city.

Then Ravan sought to kill Lakshman
 The man who slew his gallant son;
 He threw his mighty Sakti dart
 And Lakshman's life did seem to part.

Now Rama mourned his Lakshman's fate
 But soon he gained his conscious state
 As Hanuman brought Sanjeevi Hill
 To Rama's greatest joy and thrill.

But in the battle's central field
 To rank despair did Rama yield;
 He dropped his bow and would not fight,
 When Sage Agastya came in sight.

He said, "Stand up and hear O, Ram,"
 "The famed Aditya Hridayam;"
 "Take up thy bow with new courage"
 "And gain success at ev'ry stage."

When Ravan came to fight again,
 His car, he lost; and on the plain
 He stood and fought bereft of crown
 And all his heads came rolling down.

His heads though cut, did grow again
 Until Vibhishan made it plain
 To Ram, to shoot upon his breast,
 And Ravan's body rolled in dust.

The gods rejoiced at Ravan's death,
 The Earth did sigh a welcome breath;
 Mandodari alone did mourn
 And in his pyre, she fell to burn.

Then Sita, freed from Ravan's ward
 Was escorted by Vanar guard
 And in triumphal march was borne
 To Ram, who looked at her with scorn.

He grimly said, "By saving thee"
 "I've done my duty; Thou art free"
 "To go thy way, the world to roam"
 "Who lived so long in Ravan's home."

She heard his words with grief and pain,
 On her honour, they cast a stain;
 She begged Lakshman to light a flame
 To immolate her life of blame.

She said, "Were I to Rama false"
 "My heart had known anything else"
 "But Rama's name, May Heavens witness"
 "May not this fire show forgiveness."

Into the flames she made a plunge;
 The Fire God said to Ram, "How strange!"
 "My Fire itself is scorched, I swear,"
 "By Sita's chaste and loyal Fire."

"I bear witness Sita is chaste"
 "Her conduct most immaculate;"
 "Accept her, Ram, your perfect wife;"
 And she became dearer than life.

Then Rama crowned Vibhishan king
 With whole of Lanka rejoicing;
 And in his Pushpa Car they rode
 Across the sky, to their abode.

The fourteen years had just run o'er
 And keeping time to precise hour,
 Rama arrived, and saved from fire
 Bharat, who rushed in, through despair.

Rama's day of Coronation
 Marked by greatest jubilation
 Remains the happiest day on earth
 His glorious reign, the best on earth.

While Rama reigned ten thousand years,
 His reign was blessed by gods and seers;
 Except in old age, no one died,
 In peace and joy, did all abide.



THE STORY OF PRAHLADA.

In distant Krita's hoary past,
 When gods with demops fought and lost,
 Hiranya led the demon host
 As gods took flight from post to post.

In all his land was none who may
 The holy name 'Narayan' say;
 For Vishnu was his mortal foe,
 And all to him alone should bow.

To him was born a son and heir,
 His name, Prahlada, sweet and fair;
 His birth removed the Devas' gloom
 But spelt his wicked father's doom.

From birth, the boy repeated oft,
 Narayan's name in accents soft;
 "Prahlada, dear", his father said,
 "Pronounce my name, or you be dead."

But neither threats nor father's love
 Could shake the boy from his resolve;
 He said, Hari was highest God,
 And begged his sire to praise the Lord.

Hiranya yelled in frightful ire,
 Like a volcano spitting fire;
 He sought to put his son to death
 By ev'ry brutal means on earth.

He had him thrown on ocean's breast
 And rolled aloft from mountain's crest;
 He had him trod by tusker's feet
 And flung headlong into blazing pit.

Untouched by harm, Prahlada rose,
 By Lord Narayan's grace and force;
 Hiranya now besought his wife
 To poison him and take his life.

She fainted as she gave her son,
 The deadly Kal'koota poison;
 Hiranya too was stunned with woe
 To see his son in death laid low.

But lo! the boy came back to life,
 His father still renewed the strife;
 He then demanded, "Show to me"
 "Your great Hari, that I may see."

Prahlada said, "He's ev'rywhere"
 "If you will only seek, my sire!"
 "In pillar and in blade of grass,"
 "Pray trust me, father, be not cross."

Hiranya dealt a mighty blow
 Upon a post that stood below;
 The pillar split, and from the cleft,
 With thundering roar, Lord Hari stepped.

Narsimha, was his dreadful name,
 With lion's head and human frame;
 He laid Hiranya on his lap,
 His heart he gored, and drained his sap.

The gods in heav'n rained happy flow'rs
 On Narsimha, in bounteous show'rs;
 "My dearest boy, Accept this crown,"
 "And reign on earth with great renown."

With blessings such, the Lord vanished;
 Thus virtue lived, and vice perished;
 And while Prahlada ruled this earth,
 Heaven itself was on this earth.



THE STORY OF SIRUTHONDA.

A Brahmin lived in days of old
 Sirthonda, known to all the world
 For his unselfish godly life
 With only son and model wife.

Never a day could give him rest
 Until he served a welcome guest
 A hearty meal before each noon
 Though heav'ns may fall with sun and moon.

One day it was his painful lot
 For, late at noon a guest he got;
 The guest demanded human flesh
 And meat of only son afresh.

And more! the guest did stipulate
No tear be shed until he ate;
The son on mother's lap should lie
And by the father's cut shall die.

Sirthonda did well nigh collapse
But yielded lest his vow should lapse;
Where else could he have only son?
Except his one and only son.

His little boy, away at school
When told the fact was calm and cool;
The woeful parents slew their son
Whose meat they served that strange person.

The guest sat down to take his meal
Could he ever their anguish feel?
The host that stood like withered tree
Was told, "Your son shall dine with me."

He felt a shock and softly said,
"My only son on leaf is spread".
The guest declined to dine alone
From one that had no son his own.

They begged the guest to pardon them
And e'en his heart did melt for them;
He said. "Go out and call by name"
"Your son", and they did just the same.

"Sirala come; our son, come back"
And lo! from school he came with bag;
They hugged and kissed him thousand times
In tears of joy, they drowned their crimes.

They came inside and missed the guest
 But heard a voice, "It was my test;"
 And saw with open eyes and full
 God Siva, mounted on his Bull.

The Lord did praise him and his wife
 And wished his son a happy life;
 And when this world had ceased to please,
 To live for e'er in heavenly bliss.

THE STORY OF ANASUYA.

Once in an ancient hut abode
 Amidst the fierce forest horde,
 Sage Atri and his loving wife
 An'suya, all their wedded life.

Her chastity and simpleness
 So shamed the gods and goddesses
 That sage Narad, lover of strife
 Did set to test that noble wife.

He went to her and begged for alms
 With begging bowl in both his arms
 And said to her in wickedness
 To serve him in her nakedness.

She knew Narad and all his pranks
 And offered him her heartfelt thanks
 To grace her home with his presence
 With rudely shaken innocence.

She brought him alms in naked state
 But as by magic, Narad's fate
 Had turned him as a pretty girl
 From head to foot with gold and pearl.

Her modesty was thus preserved
 And proud Narad was rightly served;
 He knew too late, his change of shape
 And from his shame, he'd no escape.

He sought his father God Brahma
 And was jeered by his own dear Ma;
 They wished that he would soon become
 A grown up lady, right handsome.

And now, Kailasa's heights he trod
 Was mocked by Gowri and her Lord;
 And they reproached him, "O, Woman,"
 "Thou shalt become a pregnant one."

And last of all, he swiftly sped
 To Lord Vishnu on serpent bed;
 The Lord and Lakshmi said in scorn,
 "To you may sixty sons be born."

The sixty sons are sixty years
 And Narad got o'er all his fears
 For he got back his form again,
 But vowed to mock the Gods in pain.

He went about and slyly got
 Some iron grams in a little pot
 And he challenged the Goddesses
 If they could cook them with success.

They said, "We cannot do the task"
 Everyone whom he did ask;
 But An'suya did cook aright
 And so, he taunted them in spite.

He goaded them to send for alms
 Their lords with begging bowls in arms
 That they demand her nudity
 Whilst she did serve them charity.

The Gods went forth as mendicants
 And they were turned as small infants;
 She fed them on her breast with milk
 And laid them on cradles of silk.

The Devis missed their lords too long
 And repented the frightful wrong
 They did to Narad, who did mock,
 "Your Lords now in their cradles rock."

They begged An'suya, "Forgive us"
 "Restore our Lords by thy prowess;"
 And so, the Gods resumed their forms
 Three Gods in one, they showed their forms.

"I am Dattatreya your son,"
 "Mother and Father, you have won"
 "For, this fulfils Our promised boon."
 "Your names shall last like Sun and Moon."

THE STORY OF DHRUVA.

Uttanapada, king of kings
Was versed in all the holy things;
Two wives had he, both young and fair,
For, long he yearned for son and heir.

On Suneethi the king relied
For she was good as the name implied;
Suruchi lured the king away
And o'er the realm, she held her sway.

One day it chanced that sage Narad
Brought him a mango fruit and said,
"Pray let your queen partake this one"
"That she may have the gift of son."

Suruchi took the fruit and ate
And threw the seed outside the gate;
Meek Suneethi picked up the seed
And gulped the same to meet her need.

In proper time Suneethi bore
A son whom all the worlds adore;
He was Dhruva, the king's first born,
Suruchi looked at him with scorn,

Suruchi too brought forth a son
He was her darling Uttaman;
She charmed the good king with her wiles
And drove Suneethi to distant wilds.

For six long years, in the dark forest,
Dhruva lived with his mother best;
And when he knew his royal birth,
To the palace straight, he speeded forth.

He went and sat on his father's thighs
 And thus assumed his rightful ties
 Of blood and rank so long denied,
 But proud Suruchi brushed him aside.

And said, "If on your father's knees"
 "You long to sit again in peace"
 "Do hard penance that you be born"
 "As son to me, and so begone."

With tears in eyes and dribbling nose,
 In his disgrace, his feelings rose;
 The little boy that knew no fear,
 Sped to the woods of lion and deer.

And Narad knew his grim resolve;
 He watched the boy both pray and starve,
 And thought him fit to initiate
 On how to pray and meditate.

He told the boy to contemplate
 On Lord Narayan's form sedate,
 With conch and discus and the club
 With diadem, flow'r and yellow robe.

The gifted boy did such penance
 That Indra's throne with heat intense
 Did rock; and in his usual way,
 He tried to scare the boy away.

Nothing daunted, the boy kept on
 Till face to face, the Lord came on
 In radiant form, with arms four-fold,
 Ten million suns, in dazzling gold.

"Thy steadfast will, I do applaud,"
 "Arise, and take thy due reward;"
 "Reign thou, this earth twelve thousand years"
 "And reign in Heaven, un-numbered years."

"Thy home amidst the northern sky"
 "Shall gleam as Pole Star e'er and aye;
 "Though stars may rise, and stars may set"
 "Enthroned in heav'n, thou ne'er shalt set."

THE STORY OF NALAYANI.

In ancient times a learned sage
 Ugrathapas in his old age
 With Nalayani, his loving wife
 Ekéd out a sad and humble life.

His body stinked with putrid sores
 Of leprosy and ills by scores;
 She cleansed his sores with tender care
 For he to her was God and sire.

He still reproached with cruel words
 That purest soul in all the worlds;
 And on a day he ordered her
 To carry him to a paramour.

Without demur, she lifted him
 And in the night she carried him
 But in the darkness and the rain,
 She trod a sage who lay in pain.

He was Mandavya, put in stakes
 By some ignoble wicked rakes;
 He writhed in excruciating pain
 And cursed her in a cruel strain.

"When the sun shall rise tomorrow"
 "Thy husband shall be dead in sorrow."
 She was stunned with grief and anguish
 And in her rage, expressed a wish.

"If my lord shall die tomorrow,"
 "Let not the sun rise on the morrow."
 In his heavenly course, the sun
 Came to dead stop before the dawn.

So the world was plunged in darkness
 The gods were rendered powerless;
 They came and hailed the perfect wife
 "We gods now grant thy husband's life."

"Redeem thy curse, and free the sun."
 "Giver of life in earth and heav'n."
 Thus did virtue triumph o'er death;
 Her husband lived in renewed health.



THE STORY OF MARKANDA. (THE ETERNAL BOY OF SIXTEEN.)

Sage Mrikandu, good and great
 Was denied by cruel fate
 The gift of son to pet and praise,
 And ope the gates of paradise.

He prayed to gods and did penance
 Till Siva told him in his trance,
 "Will you have a wicked son?"
 "To live a hundred years and one?"

"Or a son to live, but sixteen years"
 "Who shall be praised by gods and seers?"
 In thankful words, he made reply,
 "The latter gift shall give me joy."

In proper time, he got a son,
 Who was to him the moon and sun;
 "Markanda" was his lovely name
 And he grew up in God sublime.

His sixteenth year was drawing near,
 His father was stricken by fear;
 And on the fateful day, he prayed
 And sat whole day by Siva's side.

Then Yama sent his grim envoy
 To take the life of Mrikandu's boy;
 It was in vain, so Yama went
 To do the job with foul intent.

He threw his noose on Markanda,
 Who hugged his God Nilakanta;
 The noose tightened on boy and God,
 And in his pride, he pulled the Lord.

The idol split, and there emerged,
 With ire that once the worlds submerged;
 Lord Rudra, in his real self,
 He kicked and killed God Death himself.

"A boy like you, I've never seen"
 "Thou shalt always be sixteen."
 Thus he blessed him, and then vanished,
 And so, his father's joy flourished.

And then it stangely came to pass
 That no one died, not even grass;
 The load on earth was far too great
 The Goddess Earth bemoaned her state.

So Mahesa, giver of life.
 On God of Death new lease of life
 Bestowed; But warned him, "Be not rash"
 "When one has donned the holy ash."

RAJAH KULOTHUNGA.
 (A TALE OF JUSTICE.)

In ancient Manu's royal line,
 Of all the great kings that did shine,
 Kulothunga was far the best
 Famous as ruthlessly just.

A son had he, as dear as life,
 Who ably quelled the border strife;
 They hailed him as a warrior bold
 And he was worth his weight in gold.

He rode his car at even tide
 Towards the temple gate in pride
 When in the twinkling of the eye,
 A calf slipped on the wheel to die.

The prince was sad, and stood aghast;
 He prayed to God for what had passed;
 The mother cow came on the scene,
 Her grief was such as seldom seen.

With human skill, she reached the gate
 And rang the palace bell in haste;
 The cow led on the perplexed king
 To see and judge the happening.

With vengeful ire, and sans pity
 The king pronounced his son guilty;
 And drove the massive chariot wheel
 Over his son, at the cow's appeal.

Then all at once, the cow and calf
 Shone with diadem and the staff;
 They praised the king and his justice
 And raised his son to life and bliss.

— —

KING AMBARISHA.

A king there was in ages past
 Known far and wide to feast and fast
 Ambarisha, Ayodhya's king.
 Legends and songs his praises sing.

He fasted on Ekadesi
 And feasts he gave on Dwadesi;
 Lord Vishnu told his discus great
 "Sudarsan, Guard his life and state."

A royal feast for one and all
 Was spread tastefully in the hall,
 When all at once, Durvasa came
 And bade the good king bide some time.

The sage went out to take his bath;
 The king that ne'er swerved duty's path
 Awaited long, and then at last
 In proper time, he broke his fast,

With water and the Tulsi leaf.
 But all the rest sat at their leaf,
 And jolly fine, the feast went on
 When all at once, the sage came on.

With angry looks and fret and frown
 He cursed the king of great renown;
 But soon Sudarsan speeded forth.
 To guard the king from sage's wrath.

Durvasa felt a scorching heat
 And fled instantly from his seat;
 He saw the Chakra close apace
 And swiftly moved from place to place.

He went to Brahma in distress,
 God Rudra too, was powerless;
 He went to Vishnu's Vaikunta
 And sought refuge from his Chakra.

The Lord told him he could not help
 And said the only useful step
 Was that he seek the king's mercy
 Whom he had wronged most wilfully.

And now, Durvasa reft of pride
 Hastened unto the great King's side;
 In his sad shame, he burst in tears
 And wished the king right happy years.

Sudarsan's wrath was thus appeased:
 The king renewed his fast and feast;
 God loves the good, and them he guards,
 Against stark might, whate'er the odds.



SATI MURALI.

A boy there was in days of old
 Born in humble Harijan fold;
 He longed to live the Brahmin way
 Although a lowly outcaste boy.

They killed the goats and ate the flesh
 And chopped the big and little fish;
 He shrieked with horror at the sight
 And left his home in search of light.

His parents searched him far and wide
 And daily missed him at their side;
 He joined a throng of Brahmin boys
 And spoke their accents in their joys.

A priestly Brahmin chanced to pass
 And saw the stranger boy surpass
 In qualities of head and heart
 And slowly asked him, "Who thou art?"

The boy replied, "I have no one"
 "In this wide world, I'm all alone."
 The Brahmin took him to his care
 To be his son and lawful heir.

The boy put on the holy thread,
 His name and fame began to spread;
 He learnt the whole of Vedic lore
 And so forgot his days of yore.

As days passed on, he gave his word
 To wed the daughter of a lord
 Of high caste Brahmin family
 Her name, the darling Murali.

The marriage rites were duly o'er
 They then retired to nuptial bower;
 The boy declined to touch the bride
 His conscience smote his love and pride.

He told the girl his guilt and shame
 And begged forgiveness of the dame;
 In noble words she made reply,
 "If you are outcaste, so am I."

In his madness, he lit a fire
 And flung himself, and in his pyre
 His faithful spouse did mount Sati
 In blissful immortality.

There sprouted from that sacred croft
 Two bamboo reeds, one hard, one soft;
 The hard as stick Lord Krishna keeps
 The soft as flute, adorns his lips.

THE COURSE OF HUMAN LIFE.

The world is full of men, both rich and poor,
 They all build castles in the air and yearn
 To live for e'er in all their pelf and power,
 Though death chases them every step and turn.

The frog held tight, in deadly serpent's jaws,
 Doth still its wonted food covet with zest
 This world, enclasped by Time withsnaky jaws,
 Still longs for sensuous joys without a rest.

Our joys with sons and friends and wife right
[well,
 Are like how we meet at inns and then depart,
 We meet and part, and wend our way pell mell
 As floating logs meet in the river and part.

Know well that riches bide not as they seem,
 And youth in man stays not with him for e'er,
 His carnal pleasures vanish like a dream,
 And lo, the sands of life are soon run o'er.

The sun that rises, sinks below in west.
 And sleep comes on, and up again he comes;
 So days pass on, and steeped in illusion's mist,
 Man's life ebbs out unseen, and old age comes,

With grey hairs, sunken eyes and clouded
[thought,
 He quits this world; the body does not last;
 The beasts may eat, or cast it out to rot,
 Or burnt by fire, this body will be lost;

Oo yet, consigned to earth for worms to eat;
 It is not wise to gloat on bodies' charms,
 They are but bones and blood and skin and meat
 Made of the five elements into human forms.

Then pray to God for e'er to think of Him,
 And Him alone to guide our deeds and ali.
 With love for all who owe their lives to Him,
 And reach His lotus feet at His sweet call.



SHWE DAGON.

A Sonnet written on the Burmese Independence Day 1949.

Great Shwe Dagon! The Soul of Buddha's name
 The pride of Rangoon perched on yonder hill.
 Thy glittering spire of gold transcends the skill
 Of man. Thy glorious sight of lasting fame
 Has tonic spell on those from distant clime
 That in the open seas have sailed at will.
 Conquering hosts have come and gone but still
 Thy winning smile and love are just the same.
 Thou art the guardian angel of this land,
 Bless us this day that oped the freedom's door
 That peace and plenty on this land may smile,
 Give us the strength to hold our heads and stand
 United, thousand years and ever more
 And in Thy shadow learn to love and smile



CAPE COMORIN.

Sacred Cape, Loveliest end of India's land,
Thy waters lave the virgin feet of Kumari
[Kanya,
And millions come to thee from every part
[of India;
They bathe and wash their sins and stay spell-
[bound in the grand—

Majesty of thy site, wherein three oceans
 Thy rocky beach and coloured sands are
 Thy rolling waves break on the rocks and
 And a thousand flakes in white—like cloth

Here alone in all the world it chances one to see
The glory of the rising and the setting sun;
And here the ocean yields its wealth of conch
[and shells,
And sands like rice and husk, a lovely sight
[to see;

Surely, this is a beauty spot for health and fun.
You'll love to hear the ocean's roar and the
[temple bells.]



OUR MAHATMA.

Who shall be dearest?
 Who shall be nearest?
 Who shall be first
 In the hearts of Mankind?

He who was poorest,
 Whose life was sublimest,
 Shedding through darkness
 The lights of the Peace.

Him we have lost, our dear Mahatma,
 Ah! We heeded not the comet's foreboding,
 For, by a vile assassin's four fatal shots,
 Smitten he lay, while on his way to the prayer.

Millions are mourning his sad hapless loss
 Millions on millions shall bow and worship him
 And History too might stand up and say
 "There never was a man so great and so true."

His ashes lie embedded over all India's rivers,
 To guide his dear people for ever and aye
 He truly abides as the second son of God
 And like Christ, immortal, our Gandhi does
 [shine.

He gave us the life to lift up our heads
 He made Mother India great and for ever free
 His Thrice sacred creed of love and non-
 [violence
 Shall teach us to live in peace and Concord.

Nations will rise, and nations will fall,
But his great name, need fear no fall,
Like the great beacon light of the Northern
[Pole Star,
It shall shine resplendent over the earth and
[the heavens.
